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# ANNIVERSARY POEM

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE SOCIETY OF PHI BETA KAPPA,

NEW HAVEN, 1826,

BY JAMES G. BROOKS.

---



*Mr. M. S. Lathrop,  
From his friend*

*W. Smith Esq.*

# ANNIVERSARY POEM

Delivered at New Haven, Conn.

BEFORE THE

**Connecticut Alpha**

OF

**THE PHI BETA KAPPA,**

SEPT. 12, 1826.

---

BY

**JAMES G. BROOKS,**

*Of the New-York Alpha.*

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**New-York:**

PUBLISHED BY G. & C. CARVILL.

.....  
1826.

(RECAP)

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*Southern District of New-York, ss.*

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the 11th day of October, A. D. 1826, in the Fifty-first Year of the Independence of the United States of America, G. & C. Carvill, of the said District, have deposited in this office the title of a Book, the right whereof they claim as Proprietors in the words following, to wit:

"Anniversary Poem delivered at New Haven, Conn. before the Connecticut Alpha of the Phi Beta Kappa, Sept. 12, 1826. By James G. Brooks, of the New-York Alpha."

In conformity to the Act of Congress of the United States, entitled "An Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the time therein mentioned." And also to an Act, entitled "An Act, supplementary to an Act, entitled an Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints."

JAMES DILL,

Clerk of the Southern District of New-York.

---

W. E. Dean, Printer.

---



New Haven, Sept. 14, 1826.

SIR,

*At a meeting of the Connecticut Alpha of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, the undersigned were appointed a Committee to present the thanks of the Society to you for the Poem delivered September 12, and to request a copy for publication.*

*We are, Sir, with much esteem,*

*Your's very respectfully,*

**WILLIAM BRISTOL.**

**CHARLES H. POND.**

*James G. Brooks, Esq. Editor of the N. Y. Literary Gazette.*

New-York, 17th Sept. 1826.

GENTLEMEN,

*I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, dated New Haven, 14th Sept. and I comply with the request which it conveys.*

*With sincere esteem,*

*Your most obedient,*

**JAMES G. BROOKS.**

*Judge Bristol,*

*Charles H. Pond, Esq.*

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**TO HENRY B. TITUS, ESQ.**

*My Dear Titus,*

*I dedicate the following pages to you, in testimony  
of a friendship which has proved its firmness and sincerity.*

**JAMES G. BROOKS.**

*New-York, October, 1826.*



## POEM.

---

Nor in the crowded haunts of busy life,  
Not in the lists of vain and worldly strife,  
Not in the bowers of pleasure or desire,  
Doth Genius find his nurture or his fire.  
The silent mountain—the untrodden wood—  
The ocean shore—the valley's solitude—  
The border of the softly winding rill—  
The swelling river—the aspiring hill—  
The frowning precipice—the mighty shock  
Of the wild waterfall—the cloven rock—  
These are the scenes where Genius seeks delight,  
And fancy hovers on her pinions bright.  
But, nurtured thus, young Genius must be hurled  
Amidst the toils and struggles of the world,

To win his way to honour and renown,  
 The wreath of evergreen—the laurel crown—  
 To pant, to strive, to merit and to claim  
 From mortal memory, immortal fame,  
 To write, where Glory rears her column high,  
 His name in letters of eternity,  
 There to remain in characters sublime,  
 Untouched by Ruin—unobscured by Time.

He wields the powers of his gifted mind,  
 And springs to exaltation o'er mankind—  
 Alas! enthroned in icy solitude,  
 The blast howls round him, merciless and rude—  
 Aspiring pride hath reached its lofty aim,  
 And Genius stands upon the mount of Fame;  
 The sun-light lingers with unwonted glow,  
 Proud to repose upon that haughty brow,  
 Where lofty, unclouded passions shine,  
 In native light, and majesty divine.  
 Look on that brow again—behold it well—  
 Is that the spot where happiness doth dwell?—  
 Doth peace commingle with the sun-light there?  
 No, that high brow is stern and pale with care—

There, hath the plough-share of regret been driven—  
 There, hath the thunderbolt of anguish riven—  
 And storms have beat against that bosom bare,  
 So fierce, that Envy's self his dart might spare,  
 Nor wound that breast, where grief hath found a prey,  
 On which to feast and batten, day by day.  
 High fated Genius! must this doom be thine?  
 Must thy proud heart be gloomy sorrow's shrine?  
 Can earth hold no companionship for thee,  
 Thou sacred image of the Deity?  
 No—all in vain thou seekest to impart  
 Thine own high passions to the human heart—  
 In vain for thee doth Beauty in her bower  
 Pour the sweet song, or cull the rosy flower—  
 The tender light of her voluptuous eye,  
 Her winning smile, and her beguiling sigh,  
 Her glance of love, her tongue's rich melody,  
 How sweet are these—but these are not for thee!  
 For thee, thou solitary child of pride,  
 There is a loftier, but a colder bride,  
 Fame bids thy breast its thoughts of love forego,  
 And interchains thee in her arms of snow.

Alas for thee ! all vainly dost thou rove  
 Through the wide world, for friendship and for love—  
 Search not man's heart—it *may* have sympathy,  
 But its emotions will not beat for thee—  
 Incapable of thy exalted fires,  
 He sees their light, and hates what he admires—  
 Bends to thy worth, and loathes thee—and his curse  
 Rests on thy life, and lingers on thy hearse !  
 Oh ! who would shrink not to participate  
 The melancholy glory of thy fate ;—  
 Admired—yet hated—envied—yet approved—  
 Worshipped—yet feared—honoured—yet unbeloved.

Yes—Genius ! though thine be a path of light,  
 'Tis like the planet's, through the gloom of night,  
 Though thy benignant heart and ample mind  
 Unite to bless and dignify mankind ;  
 Man—thankless man doth act the viper's part,  
 And pours his venom in thy generous heart.

Be it not ours, fair spirit, now to scan  
 That mighty mystery, the heart of man—



Man—godlike man—in whose exalted breast  
 The image of his Maker is impressed—  
 Man—demon man ! in whose wild bosom swell  
 The raging and consuming fires of hell—  
 Man—formed to scatter blessings o'er his path,  
 Or ruin, in his dreadful hour of wrath—  
 Man, proud and lofty in his sense of worth—  
 Man, base and mean, and grovelling on the earth—  
 Man, good and great, magnanimous and brave,  
 Man, craven man, the parasite and slave—  
 A marvel and a mystery, thou dost rise  
 To high connexion with the eternal skies—  
 Thou dost forsake thy hope, thy faith, thy God,  
 To claim a kindred with the senseless clod !  
 Man,—fallen man ! how madly dost thou mar  
 God's fair creation with the scythe of war !  
 Bathing in blood the lily of the plain,  
 And purpling the blue billows of the main !  
 How doth thy heart love the unholy strife  
 Of battle fields where life contends with life,  
 Where the sharp sword and pointed bayonet  
 Flash o'er the line, where mortal foes are met ;

Where life departs amidst the roar and din  
 Of the rude gun, and ruder culverin.  
 And this is glory ! this the shining meed  
 For which humanity must ever bleed !  
 Ah, mad ambition ! little dost thou care  
 For the wild curse of sorrow and despair—  
 Ah, mad ambition ! little dost thou prize  
 The mother's wailings, and the father's sighs :—  
 Through desolation thou must force thy way,  
 Through pain and travail, havoc and dismay ;  
 The height is fair before thee, and thy cry  
 Is, ' onward—gain that mountain height or die.'  
 Behold that proud, majestic array,  
 How their crests glitter in the glare of day !  
 The stirring trumpet rings its martial peal,  
 As onward march those daring sons of steel—  
 They march—to what ? a vain and bloody fame,  
 To the red honors of the warrior's name.  
 Look once again, at night's deserted noon,  
 See those cold corpses 'neath the lonely moon—  
 Why are they there ? because they madly bled,  
 To place the crown upon Ambition's head.

The fight is o'er,—the stubborn strife is done—  
 The battle hath been fought and bravely won—  
 The victor comes—prepare the triumph now—  
 See how the laurels freshen on his brow!  
 How prance the fiery coursers of his car,  
 What plaudits greet the son of Strife and War!  
 All righteous heaven! hath not thy mandate cursed  
 The laurel wreath by blood and ruin nursed?  
 Rolled not thy malison o'er ruthless Cain,  
 When Earth beheld his righteous brother slain—  
 When murder first polluted Eden's bowers,  
 And stained with blood the freshness of its flowers—  
 Did'st not thou damn his rash and vengeful blow,  
 And set the mark on his detested brow?—  
 Then, wherefore hath thy thunder slept so long,  
 While fierce oppression and remorseless wrong  
 Have wrought their will on this devoted earth,  
 And marred it ever since Creation's birth?

Turn from this view of crime and misery—  
 Imagination! let us turn to thee.  
 Mysterious power! whose silvery tongue can tell  
 What countless myriads in Creation dwell;

Whose rushing wing can waft the buoyant mind,  
With fleetness that outstrips the restless wind,  
To the bright home of each eternal star,  
Which pours its radiance on us from afar ;  
Thou, who canst charm life's dull reality,  
Oh, what were man if destitute of thee !  
'Tis thine to bear him back to days gone by,  
And raise the ghost of ages to his eye,  
The grand, the good, the beautiful of yore,  
All that hath been of old, and is no more !  
Thou bid'st his heart with love of freedom swell,  
And showest him how the Spartan lion fell—  
Thou bid'st him hear a nation's heavy groan,  
When the high Roman crossed the Rubicon,  
And sternly led his parricidal ranks  
Across that deathless stream's forbidden banks—  
Thou lead'st his footsteps to Leucadia's steep,  
Where raging love sought peace within the deep,  
And glowing Sappho sunk, but left to fame  
A magic song and an immortal name.  
Thou bid'st him see the vengeful Roman fall  
In deadly fury on the insulting Gaul,

And cover, with the glory of that blow  
 The stain, that Rome had yielded to a foe.  
 They pass in long review—the scenes of old—  
 The mighty chart of being is unrolled—  
 Th' heroic spirits of the past return  
 From the dull ashes of the burial urn :  
 Again they act each animated scene,  
 Start into life, and are, what they have been !

But other joys, and dearer far, are thine,  
 Joys which the heart would but with life resign ;  
 Commingled rays of hope and memory,  
 Which shine like sun-rays on the tropic sea—  
 'Tis thine to gild the heart with rosy light,  
 And from the eye to drive affliction's night.  
 Lo ! where the moonlight pours its mellow smile  
 On yonder broken and deserted pile,  
 Where the moss mantles each cold stone with green,  
 A sad and solitary man is seen :—  
 What doth he there, with eye so dark and dim,  
 And brow so sad ? what is this spot to him ?  
 Ah ! this lone spot is his ancestral hall,  
 His fathers sleep beneath yon broken wall,—

Rank waves the wild weed in his mother's bower,  
 Where sounds no more the lute at evening hour—  
 The sun arises, but the merry horn  
 Breaks not the silence of the dewy morn ;  
 The stag stands fearless on the mountain's brow,  
 Where are the hounds, the hunter's arrows now ?  
 The sun descends into his couch of rest,  
 And hides his glories 'neath the burning west :  
 It is the hour of gay and festal cheer,  
 Doth the laugh echo on the listening ear ?  
 Dim evening spreads her melancholy pall  
 In solemn silence o'er that ancient hall.  
 Sad, solitary scion of a line  
 On which decay hath set his sullen sign,  
 What seek'st thou in the mansion of thy sires ?—  
 Wouldst thou revive their hearth's exhausted fires ?—  
 Wouldst thou expel the weed and plant the flower  
 Once more within thy mother's wasted bower ?—  
 Or dost thou come at lone midnight, to weep  
 Above the vault where thy forefathers sleep ?—  
 Behold you phantom forms ! they come ! they come !  
 The sainted dead have left their marble home !

What is that graceful form, whose robes of white  
 Float on the gentle breezes of the night ?  
 A soft, sweet smile gilds that unearthly cheek,  
 And that eye's glance is pensive, slow, and meek—  
 It is the mother's spirit, and the son  
 Bends to the earth, and claims her benison.  
 Behold another, and a sterner shade,  
 In iron helm, and brazen casque arrayed,  
 The spirit of the warrior father stands,  
 As when of erst he led his vassal bands ;  
 Behind him see a high and haughty throng  
 Of martial spectres, slowly march along—  
 They pass before that lonely mortal's eye,  
 In all the semblance of reality.  
 His heart exults in long-descended pride,  
 His noble blood swells in impetuous tide,  
 And glorying in his ancestors' renown,  
 He half forgets their walls are broken down—  
 Imagination ! this he owes to thee,  
 And thy sweet sister, gentle Memory !

Creative Fancy ! canst thou paint the wild  
 And mighty grandeur of thy wayward child,

The gifted Byron—canst thou tell, if Death  
 Appalled the *spirit*, when he checked the breath?  
 High-hearted bard! in whose capacious mind  
 The extremes of good and evil were combined;  
 Common in nothing, and beyond the ken  
 And judgment of the common herd of men.  
 Tempestuous passions wrapped thy heart in strife,  
 And high excitement was thy life of life—  
 Thy searching spirit and far reaching thought  
 All that was wonderful in nature caught,  
 And where thy glance of genius brightly fell,  
 It warmed and quickened with a mystic spell.  
 Thy words are words of wonder and of fear,  
 And startle, while they fascinate the ear—  
 Wrapped in the cloudy mantle of thy might,  
 Thou wast a marvel to our mortal sight;  
 What art thou now?—the eye seeks thee in vain  
 Upon the earth, and on thy much loved main.  
 —'Tis night o'er Missolonghi's silent walls,  
 And wherefore sounds not music from her halls?



\* It is the season of the Paschal feast ;  
 Why hath the echo of the revel ceased ?  
 Behold that chamber, where the shrouded light  
 Of the dim lamp half glimmers through the night,  
 The noiseless step, the curtain moved with care,  
 Tell, that unsparing Death is busy there.  
 Look on that couch—behold that faded eye,  
 Glazed in the fixedness of agony,  
 Yet, yet, preserving in this awful hour  
 A portion of its soul-pervading power,  
 And sternly gazing ere Death dim its light  
 On the Destroyer, in his hour of might !  
 Is that the haughty Byron ? he who bore  
 On his high front such majesty before ?  
 Where is the passion of that noble brow,  
 Where is its wild and lofty beauty now ?  
 Wan, pale, he lies, while fate's uplifted dart  
 Flames fearfully above that generous heart !  
 Away—away ! avert the anxious eye,  
 In silent solitude let genius die :

\* It will be recollected that Lord Byron died during the days of Easter, and that the festival was consequently suspended.

Let no unhallowed step, nor glance, nor breath  
 Disturb the sacredness of such a death !  
 Behold ! that wasted hand is clenched in pain,  
 And fire unearthly lights that eye again ;  
 On that pale cheek the death-sweat gathers fast—  
 His lip is writhed—that struggle is his last—  
 The spirit hath departed on its way  
 To unknown worlds—and—Byron is but clay !

Where are thy pleasures, Genius, where thy joy ?  
 In scenes where man doth mix not *his* alloy—  
 When the calm midnight moon hath climbed the sky,  
 And the stars roll in vast Eternity—  
 When the night spirits sail upon the breeze,  
 And a low music whispers from the trees,  
 When the pure tears of the departed day  
 Hang in rich dew-drops on the leafy spray,  
 When holy silence lingers, sad and still,  
 On the dark valley and the moonlit hill,—  
 Behold the child of genius musing there,  
 Hath earth for him a scene more fond or fair ?  
 See, his rapt eye is burning with delight,  
 In his beloved companionship with night—

His buoyant spirit glows with high desire  
 To hold communion with those orbs of fire,  
 Those glorious stars on nature's diadem,  
 Heaven's sacred lights! how doth he worship them!  
 What wonder if the idolatrous Chaldee  
 Made them the rulers of his destiny,  
 And anxious watched, and worshipped from afar  
 The holy lustre of his guardian star!

Or seek the child of genius at the hour  
 When the mad tempest walks abroad in power;  
 When the storm-spirit shrieks upon the wind,  
 And elements in conflict fierce are joined.  
 What spirit lights that animated form  
 Which holds such high connexion with the storm?  
 The lightnings leap round that uncovered head,  
 And the air trembles with the thunder's tread;—  
 Big, thick, and fast, the heavy rain drops pour,  
 The forests bend, the mountain torrents roar,  
 It is a scene of terror and despair,  
 Yet, look and see the child of genius there,—  
 His cheek is flushed,—his bosom throbbing high,  
 Wild rapture gleaming in his fiery eye;

His soul partaking of the tempest's flight,  
And glowing proudly with a fierce delight.

These scenes are his—for him in earth and air,  
Creation's ample bosom is laid bare ;  
For him the book of nature is unsealed,  
And all her mighty mystery revealed.  
High favoured mortal—unto him are given  
Dreams which have less of earth in them than heaven,  
Hues, which are coloured with eternity,  
And visions, boundless as immensity !  
Alas ! that e'er those dreams should be profaned—  
Alas ! that those bright hues should e'er be stained—  
Alas ! that genius, in his hour of pride,  
Should mock the source whence he derives his tide.  
Oh, holy virtue ! charm of life and love,  
How hast thou mourned to see high genius rove  
And pluck his laurel in forbidden bowers,  
Of poisonous plants and pestilential flowers,  
Wrapped in those thoughts which lead the heart astray,  
And quench, forever quench, the beam of day !  
Through pride, the brightest of the angels fell—  
Pride oped for him the hot abyss of hell—

Pride drove him rashly from his duty's path,  
And doomed his soul to everlasting wrath.  
Proud Genius ! heaven born spirit ! wo to thee,  
When thou forsak'st thy parent Deity !  
Thy high wrought energies, thy might sublime,  
But sink thee deeper in the gulf of crime—  
Earth hath no middle course for such as thee—  
Angel, or devil, thou must ever be.  
Fade, fade, ye hated laurels, which are spread  
In gloomy wreaths around the sceptic's head,  
Sink in oblivion, thou unholy fame,  
Which hold'st aloft the honors of his name !  
They turn to ashes life's delicious fruit—  
They bid the angel voice of hope be mute—  
They crush the flowers, the fairest and the first,  
And purest, which the heart hath ever nursed ;  
They render time a dark and dismal wave,  
And spread tremendous horror o'er the grave !  
What ! shall this vital and ethereal spark  
Sink into night forever drear and dark,  
Nor find beyond the grave a world of bliss,  
Pure from the sins and agonies of this ?—

Away—away with this detested thought,  
 Vile web, by vain and shallow sophists wrought,  
 Great nature cries, through all her vast domain,  
 The soul shall seek its sister clay again !  
 It shall—it shall—and reach a starry home,  
 Where evil passions shall not dare to come—  
 Where rage, revenge, ambition, lust, remorse,  
 Hate, envy, and despair shall lose their force,  
 Nor rack, nor torture more the bleeding breast,  
 But all shall be serene, and bright, and blessed.

Fair hope of heavenly immortality !  
 How dread were death, if unassuaged by thee !—  
 Lo ! love is pouring deep affliction's tear,  
 Where parted beauty rests upon the bier—  
 Look on that face which lately smiled so fair !  
 See how those soul-less eyeballs ghastly glare !  
 Mark on that brow the purpling of decay !  
 Mark how those cheeks collapse and shrink away !  
 Behold the whiteness of that ashy lip  
 Is that the spot where love his sweets should sip ?  
 Touch that white hand—it answers not thy grasp—  
 Embrace that breast—it beats not to thy clasp—

Pour in that ear the song of love and truth,  
 That song which ne'er before hath failed to soothe—  
 Gaze on those eyes,—erst shrines of living light,  
 Those eyes so late with thought and feeling bright—  
 What, will they answer not? nor look, nor voice,  
 Bid thee to hope, to love, and to rejoice?  
 Then wherefore vainly linger, fondly stay,  
 And waste affection on a clod of clay?  
 Ah! this is Death, mysterious, dreaded Death!  
 That ruthless severer of clay and breath!  
 He hath broke rudely into beauty's bower,  
 Hath cut with iron scythe her rosy flower,  
 Down his dark vale hath borne her witching charms,  
 And chilled her blossoms in his icy arms!  
 Behold! she is but cold and senseless earth—  
 She, who so late was life, and love, and mirth—  
 She speaks not—moves not—breathes not—smiles not now,  
 Gone is the glory of her sunny brow—  
 A marble stillness and a moveless gloom  
 Usurp the light, the playfulness, the bloom,  
 The bland allurements which but now were hid  
 'Neath the dark lash of that voluptuous lid.

Oh! balmy smiles, and soul-subduing tears,  
 Heart-scorching fervors, changeful hopes and fears,  
 Hot gusts of passion fraught with living fire,  
 Soft sighs of fondness and of pure desire,  
 Red blush of modest and ingenuous shame,  
 Thou dearest offering of the vestal flame,  
 Sweet song of love, nature's primæval hymn,  
 Bright glance of love, which nought but death could dim—  
 Where are ye now? sleep ye beneath the thrall  
 Of yonder dark and melancholy pall?  
 What! have ye vanished like a summer dream—  
 What! shall your cheering ray no longer beam—  
 And shall the voice of love for aye be still?  
 Then wherefore, heaven! didst thou impart its thrill?  
 If love be but a transitory fire,  
 Doomed for a while to glitter and expire—  
 If by the hand of death its chords be riven,  
 Nor reunited in the halls of heaven,  
 Pure from the grossness of its mortal tye,  
 And wreathed with roses which can never die :—  
 If the high bosom of impassioned youth,  
 With all its generous attributes—its truth—



Its boundless zeal—its star-fixed honor—all  
Those sparkling gems of the heart's coronal—  
If these be doomed to everlasting sleep,  
Come, dark oblivion, with thy waters deep!  
Come, sullen death! upon thy wing of night,  
And wrap at once in shade my being's light!  
I would not live, if life and love were vain,  
If for the toil, the trial and the pain,  
The restless anguish of these mortal hours,  
No meed be offered in eternal bowers,  
If holy faith be but a bigot's dream,  
If heaven-ward hope be but a meteor's beam  
Upon the vast waves of eternity—  
Then wherefore do we live, or wherefore die?—  
Wo,—wo for man, if the rapacious tomb  
Enwrap his spirit in eternal gloom!  
If drear, unconscious nothingness await  
The soul, beyond that dim and silent gate,  
Where the worm banquets on the faded form,  
Which no returning spark shall ever warm;—  
Then, cursed be hope for her beguiling strain!  
Cursed be her fancies, and her visions vain!—

Cursed be the tree of life, whose worthless blossom  
Drops, ne'er to spring again, on earth's cold bosom!







